WHIRRAKEE

October 2011 **Vol. 32 No. 9**

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

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Office Bearers for 2011 - 2012

President	Jan Orr		5443 5668
Senior Vice President	Matthew Comer		0409 162627
Junior Vice President	*position vacant*		
Secretary	Stuart Fraser		5443 1326
Minute Secretary	Anne Bridley		
Treasurer	Ben Goonan		
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley		5442 6188
Excursion organiser	*position vacant*		
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan		
Librarian	Diana Collier	(an assistant is still required)	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer		0409 162 627
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)		0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens	e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Rod Orr		5443 5668

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Anne Bridley, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Kerrie Norris, John Lindner.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)
Regular fauna excursions take place most Fridays. See page 11 for details.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 32, No. 9, October 2011

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note: Don't you often wish that you started a nature diary many years ago, in which you put significant dates for flowering plants in the region? I have this thought every year, but every year, I think that it is now too late to start such a thing. Without it, we just have to go by gut feeling or hearsay; but even with those crude pieces of evidence, it seems that things are still more different this year. Some species (e.g. sun orchids and waxlip orchids) did not seem to be very prominent this year, while others are flowering far longer and more plentiful than usual (donkey orchids, for example). Why? I have mentioned the need for some solid records on previous occasions, so I hope that some of the younger nature observers will be starting their nature diary soon. Judging by the success of the Family Nature Club, it seems there are many up and coming keen naturalists who could undertake such a task.

Front page photographer: Sue Fraser
Who is having more fun at the Family Nature Club gatherings, the adults or the kids? It is hard to tell from this photo of Jeffrey Ledlie and his daughter Olivia. They are both enthralled at what's swimming in the little container.
See pages 3-5 for a report and more photos of keen water watchers.

Short Notices (...continued on back page)

New Name Badges

New name badges are now available for purchase from:

Bendigo Graphics, 176 Lyttleton Terrace

The new design features the club name and a coloured illustration of a sprig of Fairy Wax-flower, *Philotheca verrucosa,* the club emblem. Your name will be clearly written in large print.

Members have a choice of finish to the badge;

Plain @ $11:00 or

Domed @ $16:50

The club has had name badges for many years but, alas, most of us seem to have got out of the habit of wearing them to meetings. This must make things more difficult than it should be for new members, as they get to know us.

So, old members (most of us can truthfully be described as 'old') please find your old badge (if you can) or save up and get a 'snazzy' new one. And new members don't be left out, Bendigo Graphics is easy to find. It's next to the gun shop in the same row of shops as Autobarn in Lyttleton Terrace.

BFNC web site

For those of you who have recently tried the BFNC web address and failed, it has been re-established at: www.BendigoFNC.com.au

This address will be on the top of the inside front cover of *Whirrakee* from now on (along with our mailing address).

September Family Nature Club – Report of freshwater invertebrate activity

by Sue and Stuart Fraser

On Sunday 18th September the Family Fun Nature Club led by CMA's Cass Davis investigated macro-invertebrates in the waters of Crusoe Reservoir 7's frog pond.

It was a calm and warm spring day with bird calls and a frog 'croakcophony' greeting the first arrivals making it worthwhile being alive and certainly being there.

After an introduction by Tam, Cass led a very informative discussion about what they will find in the water from the Frog Pond.

Before the children actually got their hands wet and muddy Cass was able to engage them with questions prompting some very good answers about micro - invertebrates. She then led the 30 plus children- aged from 2 to 12 years- parents and grandparents to the frog pond where she carefully collected a healthy sample of muddy water in a bucket.

Then back to the shelter where everyone soon made quick use of the variety of equipment, especially the charts and the magnifying devices, which allowed children to see in greater detail the many living things that the water held, and to learn about the creatures they identified ...see page 4 and 5 for photos.

Cass was always at hand to answer questions and solve problems with the very eager children. It wasn't only the small children who were amazed with the variety and complexity of such tiny creatures, some very very old children could not be held back from finding out what lived in a healthy frog pond.

Gauging by the enthusiasm and positive comments on the day, there are many participants looking forward to what the next Family Nature Club will be about/ feature.

September Observations

compiled by Ben Goonan

Bill Holsworth, together with the Friends of Kennington Reservoir undertook planting and other activities at the reservoir recently. While there, Bill noticed a number of Noisy Miners attacking something on the ground. On closer inspection, it turned out to be a Barn Owl that appeared to be dead. When Bill picked up the bird, he found it was still alive, but was seemingly unable to move. Bill rescued the bird and showed the rest of the group. The bird was taken home and placed in a box. After some time it became a little more active. After showing the bird to his grandchildren Bill returned to the reservoir later in the evening and the bird was released, flying off into the night. *...continued on page 10.*

August Family Nature Club Excursion – studying macro-invertebrates at Crusoe Reservoir

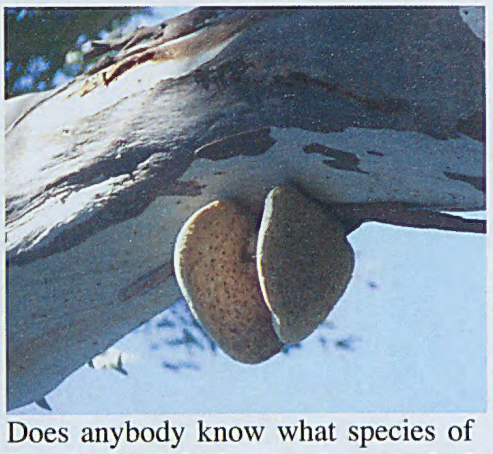
Cass Davies explained the big picture at the start (above) and then they went straight to it. The small containers that hold and magnify water (with all what's in it) seemed to have been a big hit…

…but less fancy equipment also allows viewing of water bugs.

Love the hat!!

It was a great day! A huge thank you to Cass Davies and all helpers. Photographs by Sue Fraser.

← This Tuan (or Brush-tailed Phascogale is beautifully 'showing off' its bottle-brush like tail.
Maurie Lewis has been studying a Bendigo population for a number of years. His report is on page 9. More information about partaking in regular nest box inspections is on the back page under 'fauna excursions'.
Photo by Sam Zeven

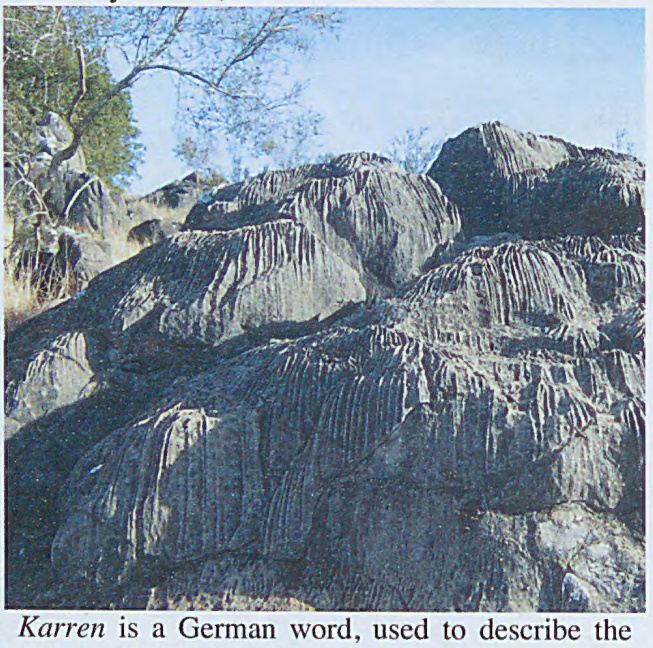


Does anybody know what species of fungus this is? It was photographed by Nicole Howie along the Bendigo Creek at Huntly

Spreading Night-phlox (*Zaluzianskya divaricata*).
Photographer: Glenise Moors (see 'Observations' page 10) ↓

A last hurrah for the Golden Wattle, *Acacia pycnatha*!! It has had a bountiful and long flowering season
Photographer: Peter Ellis ↓

'Rillenkarren' near Wee Jasper, N.S.W. – what an amazing phenomenon, but also… what a great word…Text by Jenny Selkirk-Bell, photos by Mal Haysom.
The two upper photos were taken near the entrace to Carey's Cave,



Karren is a German word, used to describe the solution furrows or rills cut into a limestone by surface water or soil water. It looks like the surface has been fluted. They can range in size from a few millimetres to several metres. Their formation is linked to the chemical composition of the limestone, the volume and nature of precipitation (how much, and how it is distributed through the year), how steep the face of the limestone is, what it's texture is like, whether it is buried or not, how long it has been exposed. The palaeoclimate of the area can also apparently play a role in their development. *Rillenkarren*, the form shown in these photos, are 1-2cm deep and greater than 50 cm long – they tend to have quite sharp crests between each rill and be on inclined surfaces. Below: reefs in Rillenkarren country.

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club - 2011 President's Report

Our *Whirrakee* is an invaluable aid for any Club President writing an annual report. The cover of the September 2010 Issue features a photograph of Black Rock in the northern Whipstick section of the Greater Bendigo National Park. This prompted memories of the BFNC excursion to Black Rock (one of the Club's 'Sacred Sites') in August 2010. The rocky reef and a few hectares of bush surrounding it had been fenced to protect the vegetation from marauding goats. The goats had not completely destroyed all the *Phebalium festivum* that was once so plentiful there and we were able to find several small plants able to regenerate in the absence of grazing. They were growing vigourously. Alas, all is no longer so rosy as nothing escapes the effects of global commerce. The price of gold has increased to the point that even low grade ore deposits are now considered viable and Unity Mining has commenced soil sampling and drilling in areas of the Whipstick. Drummond Mining wants to start mining in earnest, using an open cut! The area under greatest threat is the section of the Bendigo Regional Park to the north of Eaglehawk, however, as the Miners are interested in reworking old 19th century diggings, very little of the Whipstick will escape their interest. Black Rock appears to be within the Greater Bendigo NP but will this be enough to protect it? The BFNC, along with other alarmed citizens, have responded with some of our members attending meetings and speaking to the media. Can you help? More voices make a greater impact. If you can, then please contact any member of the BFNC committee (phone numbers are in *Whirrakee*).

Bendigo's natural reserves are a priceless asset, far beyond the value of any gold the prospectors hope to find. I sometimes wonder if gold miners think gold is like truffles and renews itself each year after harvesting so that is why they keep looking for gold in the old diggings in our forest reserves.

The BFNC is more that an environmental protest group, however. Last year, on November 30th, the BFNC launched their latest publication, *Reptiles and Amphibians of the Bendigo District*, written by the late Darren Green and Dale Gibbons. Bill Holsworth did the crucial final compiling and editing. The book was launched by Dale's brother, Steve Gibbons MP, in the new picnic grounds the City of Greater Bendigo has established at Number 7 Reservoir at Kangaroo Flat. The ceremony was a fitting tribute to Darren Green whose life was tragically cut short by illness.

For some of us, especially me, the book launch made us aware of the wonderful facility the City Council is developing at Number 7 Park and at Crusoe Reservoir. The City Council has taken the far-reaching step of employing full-time Rangers to manage the park. The results are obvious as there is very little vandalism and very little litter. Number 7 Park has become central to many activity sessions conducted by the newly formed Bendigo Family Nature Group. In November 2010, Stuart Fraser and Wendy Radford from the Bendigo & District Environment Council (BDEC) and Tamara Marwood from the Bendigo Sustainability Group (BSG) proposed to start up a Family Nature Group - they approached the BFNC for assistance to run it. The agreed organisational procedure is that the BSG takes care of the booking and webpage, and the BSG and BFNC co-ordinate the activity sessions. The aim of the group is to give children and their families the opportunity to learn about the natural history of Bendigo. To date we have had an encouraging response from all participants. We have held activities that focused on invertebrates, trees, birds and fungi and the geology of the White Hills. In addition we have had an excursion to the Saltwatch area at Kamarooka, organised by Cass Davis from the NCCMA, and tree, shrub and indigenous grass planting for revegetation at Crusoe Reservoir, organised by Anthony Sheean and Mark Toohey from the City of Greater Bendigo. The Family Nature Group thank the NCCMA and the CGB very much for giving us their time and assistance - these activities were a great success.

Members and visitors who have attended our monthly general meetings during this past 12

months have been privileged to hear a most impressive number of guest speakers talk about their latest natural history research and observations. I thank Ben Goonan, the club's Treasurer and Syllabus organiser, on behalf of the members, for his outstanding contribution in making the past 11 meetings so interesting and thought provoking.

Of course, the strength of our club comes from the support of members who find time to take on responsibilities for running the BFNC. Most have been doing this for many years. This year Sabine Wilkens marked her 20th anniversary as *Whirrakee* editor with a special coloured-cover edition of *Whirrakee*. Congratulations and thank you Sabine - the club greatly appreciates all of your excellent work. The BFNC would not function as well without *Whirrakee*, our monthly newsletter.

Anne Bridley is retiring as Secretary, a position she has held for the past 6 years. On behalf of the committee and members I thank her for making such a great contribution to the BFNC.

I also thank our other committee members: Ben Goonan, Matthew Comer (garden co-ordinator), Joy Clusker, Bev Culvenor, Kerrie Norris, Diana Collier (Librarian), Bill Holsworth, Rob and Glenise Moors, and John Lindner, for their contribution to making this year so successful. A special mention must go to Rod Orr and his team of *Whirrakee* folders who make it possible for our magazine to appear in your post box each month. Maurie Lewis has also continued his wonderful contribution managing the Hall, including bookings for other user-groups and cleaning - thank you Maurie. Other members are always available to help when and where needed which contributes to the positive and welcoming atmosphere of our Club.

I have mentioned only some of the activities that our club has been involved in over the past year, but it is clear from this summary that the BFNC is still a relevant environmental group in the community. For it to continue to be an effective advocate for natural history education and conservation, the club needs the continual input of fresh ideas and initiatives that only new members taking active roles within the club can bring.

Jan Orr (President, August 2011)

Mammal Survey Group Excursions, 2011
by Maurie Lewis

I have continued to conduct excursions in the Mandurang Regional Park forest on most Fridays to check the activity of mammals in the many nest boxes that have been placed in trees throughout the 200 ha study area. Over a period of 2 months (May-June) a survey of the Brush Tailed Phascogale (Tuan) was conducted and we found 13 females nesting in 94 boxes. In previous years the number varied from 7 to 14 on average. Coppice hollows were not surveyed. We found female tuans with young in nest boxes that were less that 50 m apart. To be nesting so close to each other, we presume the females would have been either mother-daughter, or two sisters. After the mating season in May and June all the males die. By the end of August there are only females and their new young nestlings. The post-breeding male die-off is a characteristic of several Dasyuridae, including the local yellow-footed antechinus.
DSE are aware that the population of tuans is high in density in this area, as they have carried out trappings. On 26 August Peter Johnson and Abby Smith (DSE Bioldiversity) were in the bush with me and GPS logged the locations of nest boxes of female tuans. On a different occasion Peter Johnson reported that he trapped 9 tuans in the area.
In addition to the tuans, we recorded that ringtail possum number area up this year. We found 7 animals in 10 boxes in one area. They will chew wood to enlarge the 40 mm entrance hole so that it is to be big enough for them. If a ringtail possum cannot find a hollows or nest boxes suitable for its requirements it will make a drey (a large spherical mass of twigs with grass lined nest inside). In one area of the Mandurang block there are several dreys.

The most common mammal in the trees is the sugar glider. In 10 boxes we found over 50 sugar gliders. These were mostly females and their young, but sometimes with a male.
I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks to those who have assisted me during the past year. With a special thanks to John and Christine Green.

Maurie Lewis, Co-ordinator of Fauna Study Group Excursions

September Observations (cont. from page 3)

Bev Leeson
Bev reported seeing 1000's of Dwarf Greenhoods (*Pterostylis / Linguella nana*) in the Diamond Hill area along a track off Burns Street 0.7km from the Woodward Road end on the left hand side. They were in five spots along the track and extended into the bush. Although many were almost finished, it made for a spectacular display.

Glenise Moors
14/8/11 - A Sugar Glider glided across in front of our car at 6:30pm and landed on a Black Wattle trunk. I haven't checked the box since we found a small tail and an adult tail a few weeks ago. We haven't caught the cat.

14/9/11 - Glenise found two Spreading Night-phlox (*Zaluzianskya divaricata*) weeds amongst rocks on the robin site. Ben Goonan recently identified this plant from photos taken a couple of years ago. It has yellow and red flowers and leaves with jagged edges and is common in the WA wheatbelt and occasional in the Wimmera. Last year there were 12 plants. Today the lower leaves were browning off and the upper leaves appeared to have rolled backwards on themselves into a tube. The top appeared to be a developing fruiting head.

14/9/11 - The Flame Robins have all left. This season Glenise, on a trip with Ben Goonan, only spotted one 'returnee' bird amongst them. BYK (blue, yellow and pink bands), a female 'brown bird', that has returned each year since banded in June 2004.
31/8/11 - A flock of about 30 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos settled in the big Grey Box trees behind the Moors' house at Sedgwick. They were being particularly noisy and we observed at least three begging young birds being fed.

12/9/11 - Olive-backed Orioles are now calling. Also calling are the Horsfield's and Golden Bronze-cuckoos. Fantail Cuckoos have been noticeable, especially on damp mornings during winter. Glenise hasn't heard any Pallid Cuckoos, yet.

8/9/11 – Rob and Glenise visited the Killawarra Forest with Pat & Mary Ward. They showed us 'their flower garden', a magnificent vista of slopes with dark Ironbark trunks and box trees with a dense understorey of purple Rough Mint-bush (*Prostanthera denticulata*) and orange/yellow Mountain Grevillea (*Grevillea alpina*) with Varnish Wattle (*Acacia verniciflua*) drooping above it and large clumps of Gold-dust wattle (*Acacia acinacea*) below. Filling in the gaps were Spiky Hibbertia (*Hibbertia exutiacies*), Nodding Blue Lilly (*Stypandra glauca*), Small-leaf Parrot-pea (*Dillwynia phylicoides*) with twisted leaves, Dusky Caladenia (*Caladenia fuscata*), Musky Caladenia (*Caladenia gracilis*) and Blue Caladenia (*Cyanicula caerulea*). There were massed showings of Nodding (*Pterostylis nutans*), Blunt (*Pterostylis curta*) and Dwarf (*Pterostylis /Linguella nana*) Greenhoods. Glenise had never seen Leopard Orchids (*Diuris pardina*) so closely jammed together, some had spots behind their ears and others didn't. We were shown a small group of Maroon Hood Greenhoods (*Pterostylis pedunculata*) and a patch of Mosquito Orchids (*Acianthus exsertus*). A male Gilbert's Whistler called in full view, but the Painted Honeyeater was only heard.

A specimen of *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* (locally known as Sedgwick Grevillea) was shown. The bush is flowering well this year. It was propagated by cutting many years ago.

Diary (and a few more short notices)

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, October 12 7.30pm
Carolyn Hall, 'A Touch Of Ice - Spitsbergen & Greenland 2010'.

Wednesday, November 9 7.30pm
Jeff Jeanes, National Herbarium. 'The Victorian Conservation Seedbank Project'

Wednesday, December 14 6.30pm
For the December general meeting, we usually share a meal, to which everyone is welcome to contribute something (hence the earlier starting time). The theme of the night is "A Wander Down Memory Lane"
Members are invited to bring memorabilia for display such as photos, newspaper clippings, specimens and interesting artifacts. Members can also bring a few slides (a maximum of 10 per member). You are invited to give a brief talk (no more than 10 minutes) about your items and stories of club doings. Past members are also welcome, so if you know of any who would like to come, please invite them.

Regular Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

VNPA and Royal Society of Victoria Symposium - Fire and Biodiversity in Victoria
A symposium is being held on October 24 and 25 in Melbourne. Book at http://vnpa.org .au/page/ bushwalking-and-activities/events/ symposium-_-fire-and-biodiversity-in-victoria

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

SEANA Spring Camp at Philip Island –
Sat Oct. 29 - Tues. Nov. 1.
For details, please contact Stuart Fraser.

Anglesea Heathlands and Alcoa
Alcoa is considering expanding its open cut coalmine at Anglesea into the heathlands. This not only will lead to the destruction of more of this biodiverse and beautiful area, but will lead to more greenhouse gas emissions. To do this, Alcoa must sign a new lease with the Victorian Government.

The Geelong Environment Council is asking people to write to the
• Premier Ted Baillieu, Level 1,1 Treasury Place, Melbourne Vic 3000
• Hon Matthew Guy, Minister for Planning Level 7, 1 Spring St, Melbourne Vic 3000
• Alan Cransberg, Managing Director of Alcoa Australia, PO Box 252, Applecross WA 6953

...asking for them to come up with a lease option which will protect the Anglesea heathland.

Emailing *Whirrakee* to members
The committee has decided to trial the e-mailing of *Whirrakee* to members as a PDF. This will have the advantage of reducing costs and paper use.
If you wish to receive your *Whirrakee* as an e-mail, please send your e-mail address to Anne Bridley at bridley@iinet.net.au.

N.B. Some unresolved questions will need sorting out, so there won't be a change for some time. At this stage, we just want to get a feel for the demand.